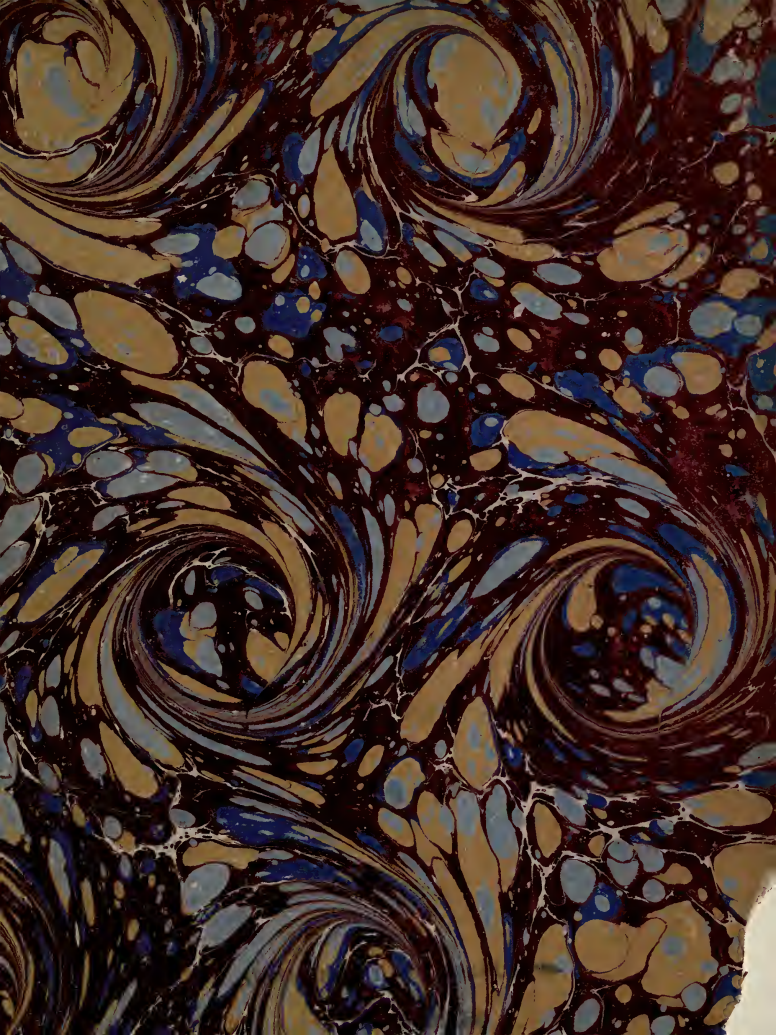

THE ROSE

BY

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

With Illustrations

Miss Kenyon

BOSTON
JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY
LATE TICKNOR & FIELDS, AND FIELDS, OSGOOD, & CO.
1878

List of Illustrations.

ENGRAVED BY A. V. S. ANTHONY.


THE ROSE

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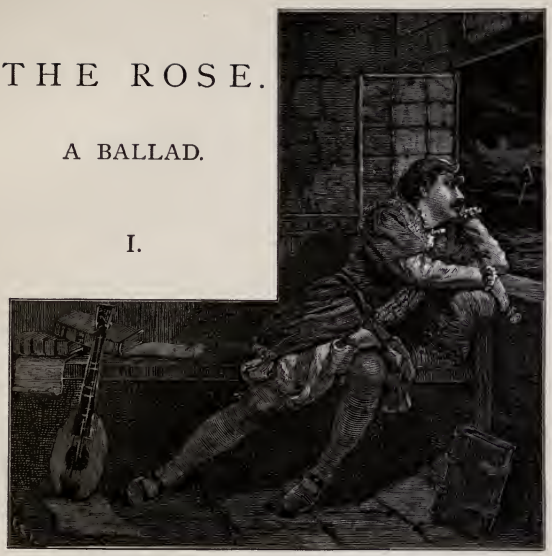
A BALLAD.

I.



In his tower sat the poet

Gazing on the roaring sea,

"Take this rose," he sighed, "and throw it
Where there 's none that loveth me.
On the rock the billow bursteth
And sinks back into the seas,

But in vain my spirit thirsteth

So to burst and be at ease.

Take, O sea! the tender blossom

That hath lain against my breast;

On thy black and angry bosom

It will find a surer rest.

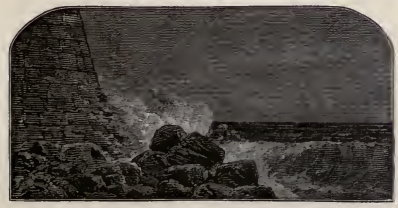
Life is vain, and love is hollow,

Ugly death stands there behind,

Hate and scorn and hunger follow

Him that toileth for his kind."

Forth into the night he hurled it,



And with bitter smile did mark
How the surly tempest whirled it
Swift into the hungry dark.
Foam and spray drive back to leeward,

And the gale, with dreary moan,
Drifts the helpless blossom seaward,
Through the breakers all alone.

II.

Stands a maiden, on the morrow,

Musing by the wave-beat strand,

Half in hope and half in sorrow
  Tracing words upon the sand:
"Shall I ever then behold him
  Who hath been my life so long,—
Ever to this sick heart fold him,—
  Be the spirit of his song?
Touch not, sea, the blessed letters
  I have traced upon thy shore,

Spare his name whose spirit fetters

Mine with love forevermore!"

Swells the tide and overflows it,

But, with omen pure and meet,

Brings a little rose, and throws it

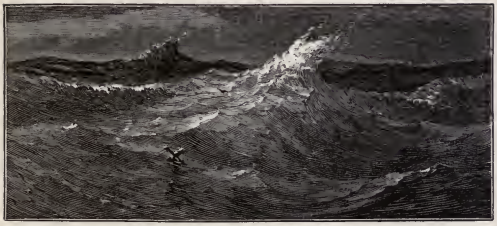
Humbly at the maiden's feet.

Full of bliss she takes the token,

And, upon her snowy breast,

Soothes the ruffled petals broken

With the ocean's fierce unrest.



"Love is thine, O heart! and surely

Peace shall also be thine own,

For the heart that trusteth purely

Never long can pine alone."

III.

In his tower sits the poet,

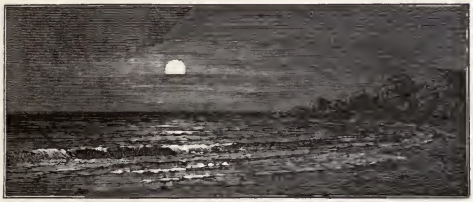
Blisses new and strange to him

Fill his heart and overflow it

With a wonder sweet and dim.

Up the beach the ocean slideth

With a whisper of delight,



And the moon in silence glideth

Through the peaceful blue of night.

Rippling o'er the poet's shoulder

Flows a maiden's golden hair,

Maiden lips, with love grown bolder,

Kiss his moonlit forehead bare.

"Life is joy, and love is power,

Death all fetters doth unbind,

Strength and wisdom only flower
When we toil for all our kind.
Hope is truth, — the future giveth
More than present takes away,
And the soul forever liveth
Nearer God from day to day."
Not a word the maiden uttered,
Fullest hearts are slow to speak,
But a withered rose-leaf fluttered
Down upon the poet's cheek.